**Lesson Four: Weimar Germany and the Nazi State – The end of the War and the Beginning of the Republic.**

Student Learning Intentions:

-Students will understand the conditions that existed in Germany at the end of WWI.

-Students will understand that these conditions **undermined** the development and success of a **democratic** **republic** in Germany at this time.

Success Criteria:

-Students will recognize that the Social Democrats were weakened by lack of **overt** support from the conservative Junker class.

-Students will recognize that any German government that agreed to an **Armistice** to end the war by surrendering to the Allies would be criticized by German citizens as well as weakened by losing the support of the militaristic and conservative Junker class.

-Students will be able to explain that even though Germany was being led by a party called the Social Democrats”, that this political party in government still returned to rely on authority and the strength of the military to enforce its decisions/power in Germany/ **mandate.**

-Students will be able to name opposition to the government

-Students will be able to describe what happened to this opposition.

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**Task one: understanding the vocabulary used in the learning intentions and success criteria.**

Vocabulary: please record definitions for the following words.

Democratic is =

A Republic is =

Overt means =

Undermined means =

An Armistice is =

Militaristic means =

A mandate is = <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mandate> - noun no’s 1 + 2; verb 10 + 11

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**Task two: match Column A with Column B**

B.

1. Designed to keep the workers happy.
2. Struck at non-German influences.
3. Put Austria in its place.
4. Unified Prussia and German states.
5. Created the “First Reich”.

A.

i. Frederick the Great

ii. Bismark

iii. Seven Weeks War (google)

iv. Kulturkampf

v. State socialism (google)

**Task Three: Read the following information and answer the questions about German Collapse and the Birth of the Weimar Republic.**

On 29 September Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff told Kaiser Wilhelm II that the war was lost and that negotiations for an armistice based on President Wilson's peace proposals should begin at once.

In October 1918 the German High Command reluctantly accepted that the war was lost.

Germany was rapidly falling apart. There were enormous losses on the battlefield and the British blockade was slowly starving the population.

Germany needed to “sue for peace”.

1. What was the British Blockade? <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockade_of_Germany>
2. What is meant by “sue for peace”?

When the guns fell silent on 11 November most Germans confidently imagined that the peace settlement following the armistice would be based on a literal interpretation of Wilson's Fourteen Points.

Woodrow Wilson was president of America when the Versailles Treaty was signed. Unlike Georges Clemenceau he believed that a more moderate approach was needed to Germany after her defeat in WWI. In this sense, he was similar to Lloyd George of Britain who privately wanted Germany to remain relatively strong so that the country could act as a bulwark against the communism that he believed would spread from Russia. (Russian Revolution 1917).

1. Who was Georges Clemenceau?

As president, from 1914 to 1917, he observed a strict neutrality in the Great War but the activities of German U-boats forced his hand especially with the sinking of the ‘Lusitania’ in 1915 which killed 128 American citizens.

1. What was a German U-boat?
2. What was the Lusitania?

On April 6th 1917, America entered the war as an "associated power" rather than as an ally of France and Britain. Ironically, Woodrow Wilson had won the 1916 national election on the slogan "He kept us out of war".

During the peace talks at Versailles, Woodrow Wilson presented a moderate voice. He had no doubts that Germany should be punished, but he wanted those in power punished - not the people. On January 1918, Woodrow Wilson had issued his ‘Fourteen Points’ as a basis for peace. He also had an idea for a League of Nations to maintain world peace.

**The Fourteen Points** were first outlined in a speech Wilson gave to the American Congress in January 1918. Wilson's Fourteen Points became the basis for a peace programme and it was on the back of the Fourteen Points that Germany and her allies agreed to an armistice in November 1918.

1. No more secret agreements ("Open covenants openly arrived at").

2. Free navigation of all seas.

3. An end to all economic barriers between countries.

4. Countries to reduce weapon numbers.

5. All decisions regarding the colonies should be impartial

6. The German Army is to be removed from Russia. Russia should be left to develop  
    her own political set-up.

7. Belgium should be independent like before the war.

8. France should be fully liberated and allowed to recover Alsace-Lorraine

9. All Italians are to be allowed to live in Italy. Italy's borders are to "along  
    clearly recognisable lines of nationality."

10. Self-determination should be allowed for all those living in Austria-Hungary.

11. Self-determination and guarantees of independence should be allowed for  
       the Balkan states.

12. The Turkish people should be governed by the Turkish government. Non-Turks in  
       the old Turkish Empire should govern themselves.

13. An independent Poland should be created which should have access to the sea.

14. A League of Nations should be set up to guarantee the political and territorial   
       independence of all states.

1. What was “self-determination” again? I know I’ve asked you this before – *just checking!*

The Junker-military caste/class could not bear to be associated with ANY surrender. They viewed it as imperative that the humiliation of defeat should be borne elsewhere.

Further, the German High Command (OHL) was now determined that the blame for a lost war should be placed squarely on the shoulders of the majority parties in the Reichstag rather than on the military and the imperial elite. On I October Ludendorff told a group of senior officers: 'We shall now see these gentlemen enter various ministries. They can make the peace that has to be made. They can now eat the soup they have served up to us!'

1. Who was Ludendorff?

For the time being the Kaiser remained on the throne, but power was now vested in the majority parties in the Reichstag, the largest of which was the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

A member of the royal house known for his liberal sympathies, Prince Maximilian of Baden, has been appointed Chancellor on 3 October 1918 with a mandate to form a civilian government charged with seeking armistice negotiations with the Allies.

1. What does it mean to have the power “vested in”?

Prince Maximilian of Baden [](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maxbaden.jpg)

8th Chancellor of Germany. **In office:** 3 October – 9 November 1918.

Monarch: William II/ Kaiser Wilhelm II. Succeeded by: Friedrich Ebert.

However, the allies balked at concluding any peace agreement with a state headed by Kaiser Wilhelm II who, rightly or wrongly, they held responsible for starting the most destructive war in world history at that time.

Wilhelm would neither abdicate nor seek a leader’s death on the battlefield.

Prince Maximilian of Baden deposed him and announced the Kaiser’s abdication on the 8th November.

1. What does “balked” mean?
2. What would “concluding any peace agreement” mean?
3. What does abdicate mean?
4. What does depose mean?

Maximilian needed to do this because Germany was rapidly falling apart in the last few weeks of the war. By October many soldiers had had enough, and there were mass desertions. The navy mutinied in November, when orders were issued for the High Sea's Fleet to launch a massive attack on the Royal Navy in an attempt to sabotage the armistice negotiations.

On 7 November a motley crew of socialists and anarchists under Kurt Eisner seized power in Munich. The King abdicated in Bavaria, and a republican 'Free State of Bavaria' was proclaimed. On the following day, revolutionary sailors and workers took over control in Brunswick. By 8 November Düsseldorf, Stuttgart, Leipzig, Halle, Osnabrück and Cologne were in the hands of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. The mayor of Cologne, Konrad Adenauer, calmly announced that he fully accepted the new circumstances.

Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated and the armistice was signed on 9 November to go into effect at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

10th November, Maximilian handed over the Chancellorship of the nation to Friedrich Eberg, the leader of the largest Reichstag party, the Social Democrats.

The party announced the formation of a German Republic.

At 11am on 11th November, the fighting ended upon the signing of an armistice.

**Between the 9th and the 11th of November two immensely important things had happened: The Junker military caste/class had disassociated itself from losing the war, and the new civilian government had tacitly accepted responsibility, not only for ending it, but for whatever was to happen as a consequence.**

1. What does disassociated mean?
2. What does tacitly or implied mean here?

So the Social Democrats were left carrying the can. They were to become easy targets.

A 'stab in the back' legend that was to play a critical role in the eventual downfall of the Weimar Republic (in January 1933). This theory was extremely significant because it provided the German's with a reason to hate the Weimar Republic, and it provided Hitler with a chance for power. The stab in the back theory is directly linked to the popularity (or lack of it) of the Weimar Republic and development of political extremism in Germany.

1. What is political extremism?

German's believed that Germany was doing well in WWI and stood a good chance of beating the Allies. As soon as Germany lost the war though, this stab in the back theory became known and accepted by all German civilians everywhere.

The leaders of the SPD party were set up to take the blame for Germany's defeat, while those who had pursued the war were soon portrayed as being betrayed by all those around them.

The **Stab-in-the-Back Legend** (literally "Dagger stab legend") was a hypothesis popular in Germany in the period after WWI and before WWII, which attributed Germany's losing the war not to its inability to continue fighting, but to the public's failure to respond to its "patriotic calling" and the intentional sabotaging of the war effort, particularly by Jews, Socialists and Bolshevicks .

1. What is a hypothesis?
2. What does attributed to mean?
3. What would a patriotic calling be/
4. What is sabotaging?
5. What was a Bolshevick?

*The stab in the back theory - Der Dolchstoß* is cited as an important factor in Adolf Hitler’s later rise to power, as the Nazi Party grew its original political base largely from embittered World War I veterans, and those who were sympathetic to the *Dolchstoß* interpretation of Germany's then-recent history.

1. What does embittered mean here?
2. What does ‘sympathetic to the stab-in-the-back theory’ mean?

Hence in *Der Dolchstoß* is an encapsulation of most of what would become Nazi Germany’s ideology regarding the persecution and murder of Jews, Communists, Socialists, intellectuals, and German dissidents.

1. What is an encapsulation?

It was Philipp Scheidemann, a German Social Democrat politician, who proclaimed the Republic on the 9th November 1918.

Scheidemann, concerned in the face of a possible workers' revolution in Berlin, proclaimed the Republic from a balcony in the Reichstag building. The timing of this proclamation was probably due to the expectation of a similar proclamation of a "Workers' Republic" by the communists led by Karl Liebknecht, which indeed followed a couple hours later.

Scheidemann continued to serve as a leader in the Provisional Government which followed for the next several months, and following the meeting of the National Assembly in [Weimar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar) in February 1919, Ebert was appointed Reich President, and Scheidemann became Chancellor, in the Weimar Coalition with the German Democratic Party and the Catholic Center Party.

Scheidemann resigned in June along with the DDP (German Democratic Party) owing to disagreement with the Treaty of Versailles, and never again served in the government, although he remained active in politics, serving as Mayor of Kassal (1920-1925), and then again as a Reichstag delegate, where he exposed military opposition to the Republic.

Scheidemann went into exile following the Nazi takeover in 1933.

Extract A:

Workers and soldiers, frightful were those four years of war, ghastly the sacrifices the people made in blood and treasure. The cursed War is at an end. Murder has ceased. The fruits of war, want and misery, will burden us for years. The catastrophe we tried our best to avoid has not been spared us, because our proposals for peace by consent were rejected and we ourselves scorned and despised. The foes of an industrious people, the real foes in our midst, that have caused Germany’s downfall, are silent and invisible. These were the warriors who stopped at home, promoting their demands for annexation, bitterly opposing any reform of the Constitution, and especially supporting the scandalous electoral system of Prussia. These foes are, it is to be hoped, gone for good. The emperor has abdicated. He and all his friends have been decamped. [run away]. The people have triumphed over them all along the line. Prince Max of Baden has handed over his office as Chancellor to Ebert. Our fried will form a Labour Government to which all Social Parties will belong. The new Government must not be hampered in their work for peace or their efforts for supplying food and work.

Workmen and soldiers realize the historic importance of today. Miracles have happened. Long and incessant toil is before us. Everything for the people; everything by the people! Nothing must be done that brings dishonor to the Labour movement. Stand united and loyal, and be conscious of your duty. The old and rotten – the monarchy – has broken down. Long live the new! Long live the German Republic!

Scheidemann, The Making of New Germany: Memoirs.

24. Who does Scheidemann see as the foes of Germany?

25. The Monarchy has been replaced by a D\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

26. The government is S\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and has its support in the L\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ m\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or the ordinary German w\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_s.

Extract B:

We have won all along the line; what is old no longer exists. Ebert has been appointed Chancelor. Deputy Lt. Gohre is seconded to the Minister of War to countersign his orders. The task now is to consolidate our victory; nobody can hinder us in it.

The Hohenzollern have abdicated. Take care, that this proud day be not besmirched by anything. It will always be a day of honour in the history of Germany. Long live the German Republic!

Reported in a German newspaper.

27. What differences do you note in the two speeches?

28. How do these differences affect the way we understand what happened on the 9th of November?

29. What explanations can you give for the differences?